



National Child Care Information Center

A service of the Child Care Bureau

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CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

The following resources provide information about the characteristics of child care arrangements commonly used in the United States, as well as the approximate number of children in different types of care arrangements.

National Surveys

National data on child care arrangements are collected primarily through three surveys. One survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau called the Survey of Income and Program Participation. The National Center for Education Statistics also conducts a survey on early education and after school programs—the National Household Education Survey (NHES). The third major survey is the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) conducted for the Urban Institute and Child Trends by Westat, which is a survey research firm. The following is a short description of each survey and a list of the publications which analyze the findings from these surveys:

■ **Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)** is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This survey collects data on income, labor force information, program participation and eligibility data, as well as general demographics. The survey sample was expanded in 1996 to include over 37,000 households. The child care topical module data series started in 1985 and it provides a national estimate for child care arrangements and family characteristics. The survey includes several questions about child care, including: child care arrangements by type of care, hours per week spent in nonparental care, number of child care arrangements used per week, and weekly amount paid for care, including the amount paid to relatives such as a grandparent. Additional information about SIPP and data files are available on the Web at <http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/>.

The following is a sample of reports based on SIPP's findings:

- “Working Moms and Child Care” (May 2004), *Data Brief* No. 3, by Heather Boushey and Joseph Wright, produced by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, analyzes child care arrangement data from the 1996 and 2001 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The report compares the types of child care arrangements used by working mothers in 1997, 1999, and 2001. It also examines the child care expenses per week and the share of total household income for working mothers of children under age 6. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.cepr.net/publications/Childcare2004.htm>

- “Who Cares? The Child Care Choices of Working Mothers” (May 2003), *Data Brief*, No. 1, by Heather Boushey, produced by the Center for Economic Policy and Research reviews the types of child care used by working mothers. In the spring of 1999, 87.2 percent of working mothers with children under age 6 reported using one of six kinds of child care: parental care, relative care, family daycare, nanny or sitter care, formal daycare, and young sibling care. Working mothers with preschool children (infants to age 5 years) most commonly chose one of three kinds of care as their primary child care arrangement: parental care, care by a relative, or care in a formal daycare. Older preschoolers are most likely to be in formal daycare settings, while the youngest children are more likely to be in parental care. Low-income mothers are more likely than higher-income mothers to have a relative care for their young children. More mothers would likely use formal care if they could afford it or if they were provided assistance to pay the high costs of this kind of care. There are differences in the kinds of child care used by mothers by race/ethnicity. Hispanic mothers are more likely than other mothers to have a relative caring for their young children, while African American mothers are more likely than other mothers to have their children in formal daycare. This resource is available on the Web at http://www.cepr.net/Data_Brief_Child_Care.htm.
- *Who’s Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1999, Detailed Tables (PPL-168)*, (January 2003), by U.S. Census Bureau, presents detailed tables of child care data from the 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) Panel conducted between April and July 1999. Data tables include information on child care arrangements for preschoolers by family characteristics and by employment status of mother, child care arrangements for children in grade school by family characteristics and employment status of mother, family and child characteristics of children in self care, weekly child care payments, and weekly child care expenditures by employed mothers. A historical data table showing SIPP’s findings regarding the primary child care arrangements used by employed mothers of preschoolers is also available for all the surveys between 1985 and 1999. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/child/ppl-168.html>.
- *Who’s Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1997* (July 2002), Current Population Reports P70-86, by Kristin Smith, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, reports the number and characteristics of children in different child care arrangements. It includes data on child care arrangements by child’s age, mother’s employment status, race, and poverty status. The data are from the fourth interview of the 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) panel conducted between April and July 1997 and refer to the child care arrangements used in the month before the interview. With regard to number of children in child care, the report states:

In Spring 1997, 12.4 million (63 percent) of the 19.6 million children under 5 years of age were in some form of regular child care arrangement during a typical week (see Table 1). Preschoolers — children under 5 years old — were more likely to be cared for by a relative (41 percent) than by a nonrelative (35 percent), although 12 percent were regularly cared for by both. Twenty-one percent of preschoolers were regularly

cared for by their grandparent, and 17 percent by their father. Care by other relatives (9 percent), or by siblings, or the mother while she worked was less frequent (about 4 percent, each). (page 2)

This resource is available on the Web at
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p70-86.pdf>.

- *A Child's Day: Home, School, and Play (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being:1994)*, (February 2001), Current Population Reports P70-86, by Jason Fields, Kristin Smith, Loretta E. Bass, and Terry Lugaila, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, discusses children's experiences on a daily basis, including differences in family living arrangements, economic and social environments, and the types of neighborhoods where they live. Other relevant experiences include nonparental child care arrangements, daily interactions with parents, performance in school, and participation in extracurricular activities. With regard to the number of children in child care, the report states:

In the fall of 1994, 20.2 million children (53 percent) under age 12 had been cared for regularly by someone other than members of their immediate family. (page 6)

Among children less than 3 years old, 46 percent had been in a regular child care arrangement, compared with 65 percent of 3- to 5-year-olds. However, among children 6 to 11 years old, only 50 percent had ever been in a regular child care arrangement. (page 6)

This resource is available on the Web at
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p70-68.pdf>.

- *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1995* (October 2000), Current Population Reports P70-70, by Kristin Smith, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, shows the number and characteristics of children in different child care arrangements (including those in more than one type of arrangement) and the characteristics of their families. The data come from the Fall 1995 *Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)* and are part of a series that dates back to 1985. This report is available on the Web at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/p70-70.pdf>.
- *Who's Minding Our Preschoolers?* (Fall 1994 Update, Issued November 1997), by the U.S. Census Bureau, provides statistics on the child care arrangements for preschoolers used by families with employed mothers in the fall of 1994. Data include the number of preschoolers whose mothers are employed. This report is available on the Web at <http://www.census.gov/prod/3/97pubs/p70-62.pdf>. For additional information, contact Kristin Smith, Research Analyst and Demographer, U.S. Census Bureau at 301-763-2416.
- *Who's Minding Our Preschoolers?* (March 1996), Current Population Reports P70-53, by Lynne M. Casper, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, examines how working parents arrange care for their preschoolers. The report discusses changes over time in the number

of children in child care, and changes in the types of child care arrangements parents use for their preschoolers. This report is available on the Web at <http://www.bls.census.gov/sipp/p70-53.pdf>

■ **National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)** is conducted for the Urban Institute and Child Trends by Westat, which is a survey research firm. The survey data are drawn to represent national, as well as State data on the non-institutionalized, civilian population of persons under age 65. Thirteen states are included: Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. The survey sample includes over 42,000 households and incorporates measures of child well-being, including child care arrangements. The questions on child care include arrangements by type of care, hours per week spent in nonparental care, number of child care arrangements used, monthly and weekly amount paid for care, and others. Additional information on NSAF is available on the web at <http://www.urban.org/Content/Research/NewFederalism/NSAF/Overview/NSAFOverview.htm>.

The following is a sample of publications based on NSAF's findings:

- “Children in Low-Income Families are Less Likely to be in Center-Based Child Care” (November 2003), *Snapshot of America's Families III* No.16, by Jeffrey Capizzano and Gina Adams, Urban Institute, uses the 2002 National Survey of America's Families to examine differences in the primary child care arrangements of low- and higher-income children with working mothers. Overall, 72.8 percent of children under 5 years with employed mothers are cared for regularly by someone other than their parents. Forty-six percent of higher-income 3- and 4-year-olds are in center-based care compared with 36 percent of low-income children. Children in low-income families are more likely than higher-income children to be placed in relative care (30 percent compared with 24 percent). It seems likely that cost is an important factor in shaping the child care choices of low-income families. This resource is available on the Web at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310923_snapshots3_no16.pdf.
- “Unsupervised Time: Family and Child Factors Associated with Self-Care” (November 2003), *Occasional Paper* No. 71, by Sharon Vandivere, Kathryn Tout, Martha Zaslow, Julia Calkins, and Jeffrey Capizzano, *Assessing the New Federalism*, by the Urban Institute, uses data from the 1999 round of the National Survey of America's Families to examine questions such as how factors such as children's maturity and family resources play a role in the use of self-care when a range of relevant family and child characteristics are examined simultaneously. It looks at how patterns of relevant factors differ for different groups of children. It notes that 3.3 million 6- to 12-year-old children regularly take care of themselves without adult supervision. Seven percent of children ages 6 to 9 and 12 percent of low-income children are in self-care. This resource is available on the Web at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310894_OP71.pdf.
- *Primary Child Care Arrangements of Employed Parents: Findings from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families* (May 2002), by the Urban Institute, describes how the type of child care arrangements parents choose can vary depending on family

income, household composition, and geographic location. This paper presents findings from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families about the primary child care arrangements used by children under the age of 13 while their parents are employed. With regard to the number of children in child care, the report states:

In 1999 nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of children under age 5 with employed parents were in an arrangement other than care by a parent (figure 1). This statistic represents 8.7 million preschool children in child care arrangements. These arrangements include child care centers, family child care providers, baby-sitters, and relatives. The most common primary arrangements used for preschoolers were center-based care and care by relatives. (page 3)

More than three-quarters (80 percent) of children age 5 with an employed primary caregiver were in some form of child care other than school in 1999. These arrangements included child care centers, before- and after-school programs, family child care providers, baby-sitters, and relatives. Compared with preschool children, a larger proportion of 5-year-olds were in center-based care (40 percent); and an additional 8 percent were in before and after-school programs. Care by relatives was less common; 19 percent were primarily cared for by relatives. The use of family child care and nannies or baby-sitters was comparable to the patterns seen among preschool-age. (page 3)

Forty-nine percent of children age 6 through 12 with an employed primary caregiver in 1999 were in some type of arrangement. The most common primary arrangement was care by relatives (23 percent). In addition, 15 percent attended before- or after-school programs, and 7 percent were in family child care settings. Ten percent of school-age children primarily cared for themselves or spent time alone with siblings younger than age 13 while their parents were employed. A large proportion (41 percent) were estimated to be in parent/other care only. (page 5)

This resource is available on the Web at
http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310487_OP59.pdf.

- *What Happens When the School Year is Over? The Use and Costs of Child Care for School-Age Children during the Summer Months* (June 4, 2002), by the Urban Institute, provides an examination of summer child care patterns and their costs among 6- to 12-year-old children of working parents. Using the 1999 National Survey of America's Families, researchers analyzed the types of summer arrangements for school-age children while their primary caretaker is working, and the amount families with school-age children spend on child care. This resource is available on the Web at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310497_OP58.pdf.

- *Child Care Patterns for School-Age Children with Employed Mothers* (September 2000), published by the Urban Institute, found that roughly 21 percent of an estimated 4 million 6- to 12-year-olds with employed mothers are regularly without adult supervision when not at school. The report finds a greater incidence of self-care among 10- to 12-year-olds, particularly those in higher-income families, in families with mothers who work traditional hours, and in families who are white. The study looked at a variety of child care arrangements including the time children regularly spent caring for themselves or time they stayed with a sibling younger than age 13 during the school year, which is defined as self-care. Other arrangements studied include care in a before- or after-school program, by a non-relative outside of the child's home, a nanny or babysitter, a relative, or a parent. This resource is available on the Web at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/op41/occa41.html>.
- *Child Care Arrangements for Children Under Five: Variation Across States* (March 2000), by Jeffrey Capizzano, Gina Adams, and Freya L. Sonenstein, published by the Urban Institute, provides national and State data on the primary child care arrangements used by employed mothers by of children under 5 years. Also, because child care experiences tend to vary for children of different ages and incomes, they examined infants and toddlers separately from 3- and 4-year-olds, and children from families with incomes above 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) separately from those with incomes at or below 200 percent of the FPL. This resource is available on the Web at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/anf_b7.pdf.

■ **National Household Education Surveys (NHES)** are conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NHES program provides descriptive data on the educational activities of the U.S. population and offers researchers, educators, and policymakers a variety of statistics on the condition of education in the United States. NHES data provide a national level estimate for early childhood program participation. The NHES program cover learning at all ages, from early childhood to school age to adulthood. The following NHES surveys provide data on early childhood and school age care.

Early Childhood Surveys

NHES' two primary early childhood surveys are the School Readiness (SR-NHES) and Early Childhood Program Participation (ECPP-NHES or ECE-NHES) surveys. The School Readiness survey was conducted in 1993, with a limited number of questions asked in the Parent-NHES survey of 1999. The Early Childhood Program Participation surveys occurred in 1991, 1995, and 2001, with a subset of questions also asked in 1999. ECPP surveys include questions on children's participation in formal and informal nonparent care and education programs and characteristics of care arrangements. The early education survey (ECPP-NHES: 2001) includes interview data completed with parents of 6,749 children, of whom 3,599 were infants or toddlers, and of whom 3,150 were preschoolers.

School Age Surveys

NHES' two major repeating surveys on school-age children include: the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI-NHES) conducted in 1996 and 2003, and the Before- and After-School Programs and Activities survey (ASPA-NHES) conducted in 2001. Selected items

from the PFI and ASPA, rather than the full questionnaires, were asked in 1999. The ASPA survey will be conducted again in 2005, and the PFI is planned for 2007. The PFI and ASPA surveys have collected information on parent and family involvement in children's education, before-and after-school programs and activities participation, school choice, homeschooling, parent satisfaction with children's schools, and school-age children with disabilities.

Additional information about the NHES Program is available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/nhes/index.asp>. The following is a sample of the publications based on NHES early childhood and school age survey data:

- “Characteristics of Children in Early Childhood Programs” (2002), *NCES Fast Facts Tool*, by the National Center for Education Statistics, includes data on the percentage of children ages 3 to 5 who were enrolled in center-based early childhood and education programs, by child and family characteristics for the years 1991, 1995, 1999, and 2001. This resource is available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=78>.
- *The Digest of Education Statistics 1999* (May 2000), contains the following tables that may be useful: “Table 6. Percent of the population 3 to 34 years old enrolled in school, by age: April 1940 to October 1998” and “Table 46. Enrollment of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in preprimary programs, by level and control of program and by attendance status: October 1965 to October 1998.” This resource and the tables are available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000031.pdf>.
- *Participation of Kindergartners through Third-Graders in Before- and After-School Care* (August 1999), by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), states:

During the spring of 1995, approximately 39 percent of kindergartners through third-graders were receiving some type of before- and/or after-school care on a weekly basis from persons other than their parents (table 1). This translates to more than 6.1 million primary school children. (page 3)

This report contains information from the 1995 National Household Education Survey (NHES: 95) on the before- and after-school care arrangements of children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Additional information is available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999013.pdf> or contact Jerry West, NCES, at 202-219-1574.

- *Characteristics of Children's Early Care and Education Programs: Data from the 1995 National Household Education Survey* (June 1998), by Sandra L. Hofferth, Kimberlee A. Shauman, Robin R Henke, Jerry West, published by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) analyzed the characteristics of the care and education children regularly receive before entering school. The purpose of this study was to examine the relation between risks of school failure and parental preferences for child care, sources for parental child care arrangement information, and the fulfillment of parental preferences. The report focuses on various characteristics of child care arrangements that can be categorized into two groups: those that have been associated with children's development, and those that stem from parental concerns other than child

development, such as staying within budgets or maintaining work schedules. This resource is available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/98128.pdf>.

- *National Household Education Survey, Early Childhood - School Readiness* (1996), published by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, has the percentage of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds enrolled in center-based programs or kindergarten for the years 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1996 in table format. These tables are available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/quicktables/Detail.asp?SrchKeyWord=kindergarten&Key=84&optSearch=All&quarter=&topic=All&survey=All&sortby=>.
- *Child Care and Early Education Program Participation of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers* (October 12, 1995), a report from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, using information from the 1995 National Household Education Survey (NHES), states:

During the spring of 1995, about 6 out of every 10 children under the age of six who have yet to enter kindergarten were receiving some type of care and education on a regular basis from persons other than their parents (table 1). This translates to more than 12.9 (commonly reported as 13 million) million infants, toddlers, and preschool children receiving such care and education. (page 2)

This report is available on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=95824>. Additional reports and data based on the National Household Education Surveys are available from the National Center for Education Statistics on the Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/getpubcats.asp?sid=004>.

Additional Resources

■ The *Child Care Supply and Demand* document under the Child Care Arrangements topic in the popular topic section of NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.org/poptopics/ccsupply.html> provides a sample of State reports with information on the characteristics of child care arrangements in these States.

■ "Section 9 — Child Care" (April 2004), in the 2004 Green Book, by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, includes information on the employment and marital status of mothers; child care arrangements used by working mothers; child care costs, supply, and standards and quality; and other child care data tables. The 2004 Green Book is available on the Web at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>. "Section 9 - Child Care" is available on the Web at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/greenbook2003/Section9.pdf>.

■ “In Early Childhood Education and Care: Quality Counts” (January 10, 2002) in *Education Week*, describes how States’ interest in early childhood education is growing but large gaps in access and quality remain while the number of children in child care continues to grow. It states:

Today, 11.9 million children younger than 5 in the United States – or about six in 10 – spend part of their waking hours in the care of people other than their parents: relatives, caregivers operating out of their homes, workers in child-care centers, Head Start staff members, and teachers in state-financed prekindergarten among them.

Additional information is available on the Web at <http://www.edweek.org/sreports/qc02/templates/article.cfm?slug=17exec.h21>.

■ *America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being* (2002), by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, is the sixth annual report to the nation on the condition of children in America. Contextual measures describe the changing population and family context in which children are living, and indicators depict the well-being of children in the areas of economic security, health, behavior and social environment, and education. In terms of the number of children in child care, the report states:

In 2001, 61 percent of children from birth through age 6 (not yet in kindergarten) received some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents. This translates to approximately 12 million children and is about the same proportion of children in child care as in 1995. (page 10)

In 1997, nearly half of preschoolers (children under age 5) with working mothers were primarily cared for by a relative while their mother worked, while 22 percent were primarily cared for by nonrelatives in a home-based environment and another 22 percent were cared for in a center-based arrangement. (page 11)

This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.childstats.gov/ac2002/pdf/ac2002.pdf>.

■ “Primary Child Care Arrangements Used for Preschoolers by Families with Employed Mothers: Selected Years, 1977-1994” (Internet Release date: January 14, 1998) by the U.S. Census Bureau, is a table with data on changes in child care arrangements over the past three decades. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/child/p70-62/tableA.txt>.

The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.